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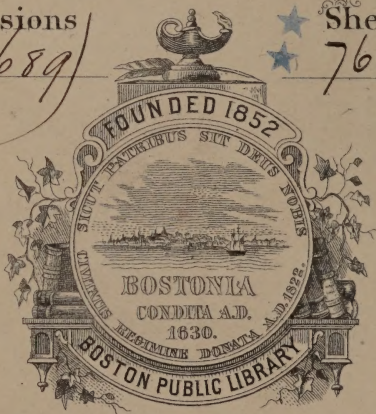
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CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

• IS NOT

PANTHEISM.

A REPLY TO

REV. A. J. GORDON, D. D.

BY C. M. BARROWS,

Author of "Bread Pills: A Study of Mind-Cure."

BOSTON:

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AUG 5 1997

Christian Science is not Pantheism.

It is time to make a definite statement of the 'fundamental doctrines of Christian science, in reply to the attacks made upon them by those who do not, or will not, have the candor to do them justice. The newspaper organs of sectarianism, called evangelical, have assumed a hostile attitude from the start, and have recently renewed the warfare against the teachings and practice of those who heal in Christian science, with a blind and dogged persistence worthy of a better cause.

In the forefront of what appears like a concerted movement to stamp out Christian science, if possible, may properly be set an article on "*Christian Science Tested by Scripture*," from the pen of Rev. A. J. Gordon, D.D., a Baptist clergyman of Boston, which was published in the *Congregationalist*, March 12, 1885. Ostensibly this article is a sharp denouncement of the theology uttered in the text-books of Christian science, written by Mrs. Mary B. G. Eddy, President of the Massachusetts Metaphysical College; but no attentive reader will fail to perceive that it is virtually a severe reflection on the beliefs and moral standards of people, especially women, who accept the condemned doctrines. A defence of the books against Dr. Gordon's charges, therefore, is, in effect, an answer to all assaults of critics of the same guild. Consequently, the work of the defender is simply to establish a fact. So far as the critic is concerned, the duty is accomplished when it is shown that what he charges is not what the books actually state; and the more difficult task of proving

his case by facts may be safely left for his further consideration.

Dr. Gordon is doubtless familiar with the story of two knights who quarrelled about the material of a shield, of which each had seen but one side. Such a knight is he, in his rash denunciations of the published writings of the "chief lady apostle" of Christian science in this city. He means well, let us charitably presume, but has utterly missed the true import of the books he unsparingly condemns, and falsely interpreted the teacher he so vigorously arraigns.

When the critics questioned the truth of one of Tennyson's masterpieces, because they were unable to understand it, the great laureate replied with scorn, that they were fools to expect to fathom at sight a poem that it took him many years to compose. But a lady of fair abilities, at least, has put the results of a lifetime of study into a technical and didactic treatise on the same Christian idealism that pervades the threnic verse of *In Memoriam*; and now Dr. Gordon, dashing at it with Ithuriel's spear (?), would drive it to the wall, and label it "a creed of pantheism and blasphemy." In the face of this gallant onslaught, however, I confidently assert that he has grossly, though unintentionally, misconstrued the whole subject, and done the writer of the books a deep wrong.

Nor was this article in the organ of New England Orthodoxy the only attack made by this zealous doctor of divinity on the Christian scientists. At the session of the Boston Monday lectureship of the same week in which the published criticism appeared, Rev. Joseph Cook, the oracle of that institution, read from his platform a letter from Dr. Gordon, in which the writer denounced Christian science in the most sweeping and bitter terms. To this attack Mrs. Eddy was reluctantly invited to make a verbal reply, and at a subsequent meeting of Mr. Cook's audience was permitted to

address them for ten minutes during the interim between the lecturer's prelude and his main address. Mrs. Eddy accepted, and in that brief period publicly stated that she was not a spiritualist; that she believed in God as a Supreme Being, and in the atonement of Christ. She defended her method of healing in science from the accusations of those who say it is one mind acting on another mind, a transference of an image of thought, mesmerism, magnetism, "faith-cure;" and closed with a definition of man. But that address was not intended as a reply to Dr. Gordon's *Congregationalist* article, and the time and place were not suited to a refutation of charges which, in printed form, had gone into thousands of homes and wrought the mischief of prejudice and antagonism against one, who, so much that is good may be said about her, does not deserve to stand in the false light in which Dr. Gordon has so ungraciously placed her.

In this article Dr. Gordon makes no objection to the practice of mind-cure, pure and simple; he even approves of the good done by that beneficent art. He raises, as has already been pointed out, a signal of warning against the dangerous theology he fancies himself to have found in the pages of Mrs. Eddy's works, and says: "It is, therefore, as a theologian and a defender of the gospel that I now write upon this question." What, then, are his charges?

In the first place, Dr. Gordon calls the theology of the books pantheism. What is pantheism? An authority which I think he will accept as correct and highly orthodox, defines it thus: "Pantheism, as distinguished from theism, asserts the consubstantiality of God and nature. Its rudest form is a universal fetichism. In its philosophical development, it makes God the one substance, of which all phenomena of mind and nature are but modes or attributes. He is the impersonal Absolute, who sleeps in the mineral, dreams in the

animal, and wakes in man. God is nature, pervaded and inspired by an immanent principle; and nature is God, in the manifestation of his essence or the evolution of his power." This defines the heresy that Dr. Gordon, by means of quotations wrested from their proper connections, seeks to foist on the text-books under review. By a like unfair process one might almost discover pantheism in the Bible itself.

Now, against this wrong let us put a true statement of the doctrine of God derived from the same source. Nothing in Mrs. Eddy's books is more clearly taught or forcibly accented than that nature is *not* God, and God is not *in* nature. Contrary to pantheism, the canons of Christian science deny that God is *in* nature at all. Without looking beyond the very volume from which Dr. Gordon draws most of his proof-texts, namely, *Science and Health*, Vol. II., I find the declarations: "God is Spirit, and Spirit is infinite." "God, which is the perfect Mind or Principle, . . . is all that is real or eternal." "The mind is infinite, limitless, and eternal." "The Infinite never entered the finite, . . . so Mind never passed into Matter, the unlimited into limits." "Spirit is never in limits or limbo." "Matter is neither intelligence nor creator." "To understand that Mind is not pent up within the boundaries of a personal man, confined to the ear and eye for sound and sight, to the muscles, bones, etc., for locomotion is metaphysical science, whereby we discern man's real being." "We must break the fetters of belief that would imprison Mind in matter." "There is no intelligence in the thought, the seed, or the flower." How opposite to the most vital article of a pantheistic creed are those statements! The pantheist declares that God is the universe, and the universe is God; Mrs. Eddy says, God is not the universe, and the universe is not God.

Chapter X. of this volume opens with the declara-

tion that "God is Supreme, the only Life, Substance, and Intelligence of the universe and man." Does Dr. Gordon know of any other Supreme power? or any other source of life and intelligence? "God is Principle, and not person; Mind, and not matter," says the book; and "this Principle is what the Scriptures declare it, namely, Life, Truth, and Love." If Dr. Gordon accepts Scripture authority, he must allow all of this quotation except the three words "and not person." But if God be infinite Spirit, as the text-book and the Bible both teach, what room is there for ascribing personality to him? Even the creed of the Baptist church, of which Dr. Gordon is a licensed minister, does not attempt so daring a thing, and employs *person* only when speaking of the three modes in which Deity becomes manifest to finite man. The plain meaning of the statement that God is not a person is conclusively proved to be, that man cannot limit the infinite All-in-all, for the word *person* limits. "God is Soul, or Spirit," it is affirmed, "and Spirit has no outline; it is neither a limited mind, nor a limited body, therefore it cannot be person, and is Principle." I challenge any fair-minded reader to so construe the letter or spirit of Mrs. Eddy's books as to make them teach pantheism.

Whether there be, or be not, a personal man is scarcely a vital question of theology or morals; but it may be well to remind the reader that these books teach that man was created in the image and likeness of God; that the man of whom our senses inform us does not answer to that image, and consequently is in no sense a true and perfect man. Is it so wild a statement, then, to say that a true man is not a person, that is, the corporeal being of the senses?

But what of that pagan creation of Milton, who is poetically said to be ever fighting against the Almighty? Do these text-books fail to give the devil

his due? Dr. Gordon insists that he (Satan) shall have his inalienable rights in the universe, rights that man is bound to respect, and that the books deny even *his* personality. If it be true, as he says, that "any 'wisdom of God' which throws Satan into eclipse bears the clear imprimatur of the prince of darkness," then it must be conceded that not only Christian science, but all teachings of Christianity and human reason are at fault. But is it a fact, Dr. Gordon, that the wisdom of God does not and cannot eclipse Satan? Call Satan a person, or simply a name for the power of evil in the world, and is it anything less than blasphemy to say that God does not and cannot eternally eclipse him (or it)? But these books agree with most Christian people in regarding the terms "devil" and "Satan" as synonymous with evil, which surely is not a *person*, whatever else it may be.

In nothing that he says does Dr. Gordon get farther from the truth than in what he assumes the wicked canons to teach concerning sin, sickness, and death. Nowhere in those pages is it denied that transgressions of the Hebrew Decalogue, or any other ethical code, are what all upright people consider them; nor will Dr. Gordon find in his roamings up and down the earth, a more rigorous type of practical morality, or clearer denunciations of evil-doing in every form than exist among Christian scientists. Such sins are as real to their senses as to his. When they call sin "error," "delusion," "phantom," they mean, not what he assumes, but that the real man, who was created in the image of God, does not commit them. When they look abroad, and behold mankind immersed in sense, and blind to the truth of God, they feel, as every Christian must feel, that there is nothing else in the universe so terrible as sin. The cruel gibe that certain "very practical sinners will take refuge under this system, and insist that the sins of the body and the transgressions

of the flesh are harmless, since they are only the phantom of a phantom, and the shadow of a shadow," is uncalled for and unjust.

If Dr. Gordon or any one else chooses to think that Christian scientists are cranks on account of the way in which they regard and treat disease, it is not worth while to waste time in trying to set them right. Hundreds of people in this city know from personal experience the benefits wrought in the name of the science, and have come to regard their own sickness as a phantom of the brain, and all disease an error. Nor would the statement that death is unreal be so astounding to Dr. Gordon, if he would view it side by side with the words of Jesus, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die;" the exclamation of Paul, "O death, where is thy sting!" and the comfort-giving lines of Longfellow, "There is no death; what seems so is transition."

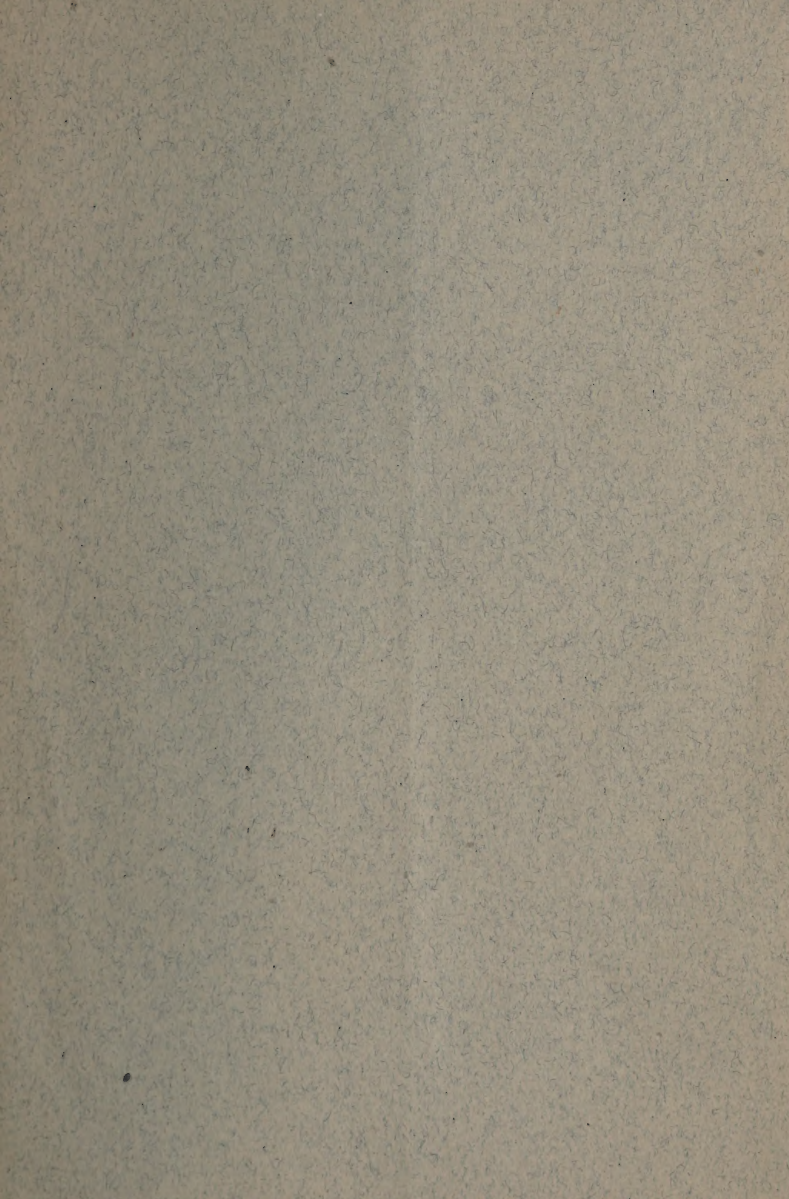
In judgments of this character, where there is so great liability to mistake, I submit that it becomes one whose own views on the age of miracles have subjected him to a charge of unsoundness, to exercise a large charity, and avoid hasty conclusions based on insufficient data. He should remember also, that if these things be of men, they will come to naught; but if they be of God he cannot overthrow them. Whatever in code or creed brings forth good fruit and makes men better, is good.

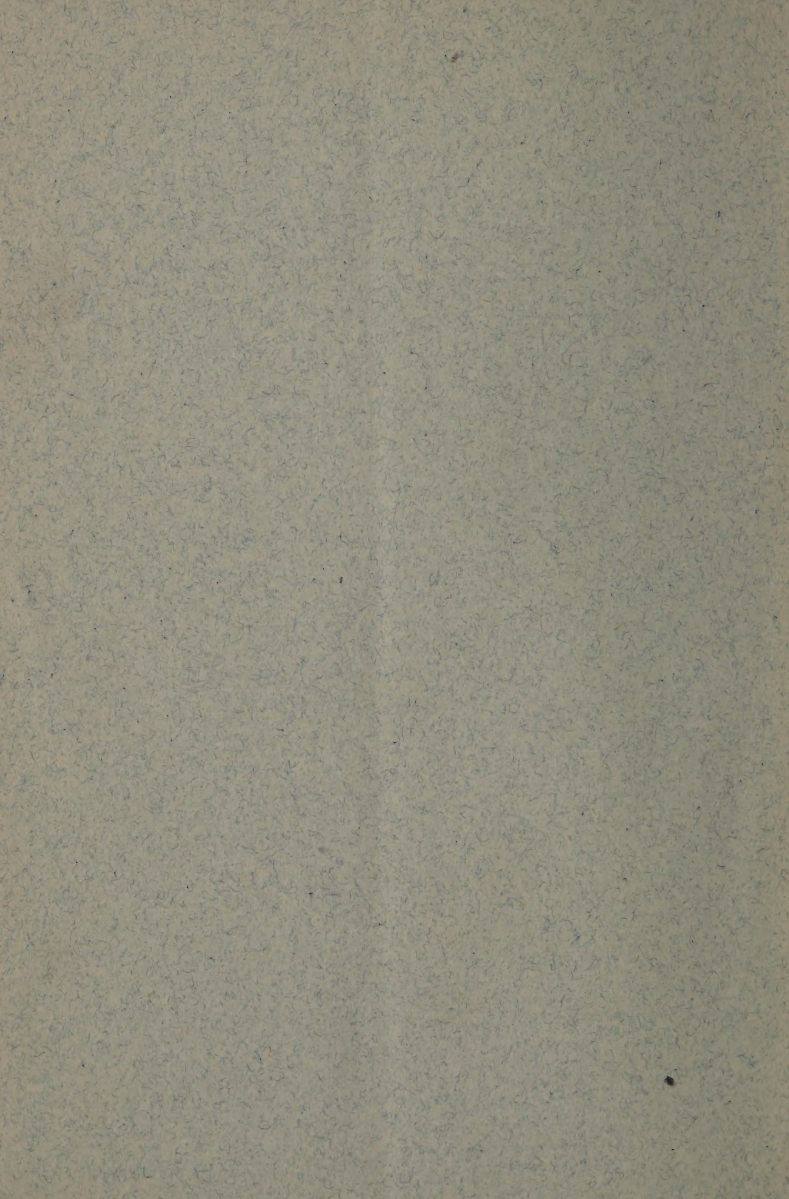
Again, the palpable error contained in his statement about "faith-cure" in this article, might very properly weaken the reader's confidence in the other assertions it contains. Dr. Gordon says: "All who credit 'faith-cures,' as they are sometimes called, hold that they are the result of God's direct and supernatural action upon the body of the sufferer." Rash ignorance alone could dictate such a sentence; for nearly every physician in the land "credits faith-cures," but does not ascribe

them to supernatural agencies; to say nothing of thousands of others who hold a like opinion.

Dr. Gordon may have, as he affirms, no love of controversy, and no personal ill-will towards those whom he criticises; but he certainly shows no disposition to do them justice in this case, and his crass misstatement of the subject he pretends to treat with fairness, clearly proves that either hostility or unpardonable carelessness in examination inspired his critical pen. If he knew as much of those who profess this faith as he ought to know before judging their characters or conduct, he surely owes them an apology for the wrong he has done them in the article here reviewed.

It is a fact notable in this connection, that those who imbibe the ideas that Christian science inculcates, soon exhibit a marked change of spirit and temper, and thenceforth lead happier and better lives. It is not true that "scores of young ladies . . . are drawn into the system under the impression that they are getting some finer quality of Christianity." They first apply to the healers for physical help; then continue the study of the subject, because the ideas taught them minister to their spiritual life, and seem likely to be of permanent value in showing them that spiritual concerns are more than material good. I have known scores of women who have attended the courses of lessons given by the scientists, but have yet to learn of one who afterwards became less Christian, or less loyal to her noblest ideal of womanhood.





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